



Asifa Bhutto briefed on proposal to establish JPMC comprehensive stroke center

First Lady Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari, MNA, was briefed on the vision and implementation roadmap for the proposed Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) Comprehensive Stroke Center on Wednesday by Dr. Syed Fazal Zaidi, Professor of Neurology at the University of Toledo, internationally renowned vascular and interventional neurologist and Founding Director of the JPMC Comprehensive Stroke Program.



Shaza Fatima attends ACT AI graduation ceremony

Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday visited the headquarters of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and attended the graduation ceremony of ACT AI, Pakistan's largest Artificial Intelligence training initiative. Project Director Rana Jaleed Ahmed briefed the Federal Minister and informed her that more than 82,000 students from across the country had applied for the programme.

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Called on

ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's solidarity with Kuwait, reiterates invitation to Kuwaiti Crown Prince

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's full solidarity with Kuwait and strongly condemned recent attacks on Kuwait and other Gulf countries amid the ongoing regional conflict.

The prime minister received a call on from Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, here at the

Prime Minister's Office, a news release said.

Welcoming the visiting dignitary, Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed his best wishes to the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Recalling the long-standing fraternal ties between the two nations, the Prime

Minister said Pakistan and Kuwait had always stood by each other through thick and thin, underpinned by shared values and mutual trust.

The prime minister told the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister that Pakistan was playing its role as an honest and sincere mediator and facilitator in ongoing regional peace efforts, and thanked Kuwait's leadership for supporting these initiatives.

In his remarks, Foreign

Minister Al-Sabah conveyed greetings from the Kuwaiti leadership to the Prime Minister and reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation.

He specifically expressed appreciation for the roles played by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in advancing dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the ongoing regional crisis, and thanked Paki-

stan's leadership and people for their steadfast support to Kuwait during the difficult period.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, along with the federal ministers for Defence, Commerce, National Food Security & Research, Communications, Maritime Affairs, and Petroleum, as well as the Adviser to the Prime Minister and senior government officials.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister meets Field Marshal Asim Munir to strengthen bilateral ties



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: H. E. Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait accompanied by Mr. Nassar Abdul Rahman J. Al-Mutairi, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces (GHQ), Rawalpindi.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional

security and steps to further strengthen bilateral cooperation were discussed.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's steadfast support, its constructive contribution toward regional peace and stability and the deep-rooted fraternal ties shared between the two nations.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's commitment to Kuwait, emphasizing that both countries share a common vision for regional peace and prosperity.

Security Forces eliminate 32 Indian-backed terrorists in 24-hour operations

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: In continuation of security forces operations against the terrorists nexus of Indian sponsored Fitna al Khwarij and Fitna al Hindustan, comprehensive joint operations are being carried in different parts of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa & Balochistan to weed out terrorists and their facilitators. In last 24 hours security forces have successfully eliminated thirty two terrorists of these Indian proxies.

On night 28/29 July 2026, multiple intelligence-based area sanitization and targeted operations were conducted in district Khyber of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. During these targeted operations, security forces effectively engaged different terrorist locations killing twenty four terrorists belonging to Fitna al Khwarij. Meanwhile, security forces have also conducted multiple intelligence-based operations in District Nushki of Balochistan



where after an intense engagement eight terrorists belonging to Fitna al Hindustan were sent to hell.

Weapons, ammunition and improvised explosive devices used by terrorists were also recovered and destroyed during operations.

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored terrorist found in the area. Relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azme Istehkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

PM directs effective strategy for employment opportunities under Youth Program

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to work vigorously on an effective and comprehensive strategy to create employment opportunities under the Prime

Minister's Youth Program.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Chairman of Prime Minister's Youth Program Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, who called on him here, highlighted that providing top-class education and vocational training to the youth remained among the

government's priorities.

During the meeting, Rana Mashhood briefed the prime minister on the progress of ongoing projects being executed under the Youth Program.

Prime Minister Shehbaz emphasized that equipping young people with modern

technology, artificial intelligence (AI), digital skills, and entrepreneurial abilities was an urgent need of the hour.

He said that the government was utilizing all available resources to provide youth with equal opportunities in employment, business, education, and

skills.

Calling the educated and skilled youth the guarantors of the nation's bright future, the prime minister highlighted that a skilled workforce played a pivotal role in the country's economy, industry, and social diversity.

War of words intensifies as PML-N and PPP lock horns after AJK polls

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The first phase of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's general elections has triggered an escalating political confrontation between coalition partners Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), overshadowing the electoral contest with allegations of rigging, violence, mismanagement and competing claims of public support.

Although the Election Commission's provisional

results handed the PML-N a commanding lead in Mirpur Division, the outcome has been fiercely contested by the PPP, which insists its mandate was stolen in several constituencies. The ruling party, meanwhile, has dismissed the allegations outright, maintaining that voters freely elected the PML-N on the strength of its governance record.

The exchange of accusations has intensified with each passing day, drawing in senior leaders from both parties, including



PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Punjab Chief

Minister Maryam Nawaz, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Adviser Rana Sanaullah, Senior Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari and several other party leaders.

The bitter political spar has unfolded as Azad Kashmir prepares for the remaining two phases of polling, leaving the controversy surrounding the first phase at the centre of the election campaign.

Bilawal calls PML-N 'Product of Rigging', says Muzaffarabad voters will foil Aug 2 plans

MUZAFFARABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday accused the PML-N of rigging and called it a "product of rigging right from the word go."

Addressing PPP workers in Muzaffarabad, he rejected results from 30 constituencies in the Mirpur elections, saying he had the data and vowed to reclaim seats where PPP candidates won. He challenged the AJK Election Commission to investigate rigging claims if it had nothing to hide.

Bilawal expressed hope that voters in Muzaffarabad would

foil PML-N's alleged rigging plans in the August 2 polls. He said the PPP was never given power "on a platter" and claimed the PM and Punjab CM entered office via boycott-47.

Criticizing PTI's boycott, he said no party wins rights by staying out of elections, adding boycotts only invite intervention from the Center and Punjab.

Bilawal stressed reforms for AJK so local grievances reach the Center, and said people of Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch and Mirpur must decide their own affairs.

Shah Ghulam Qadir rejects rigging claims, says PML-N victory reflects public trust

City Desk

NEELUM: President of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Shah Ghulam Qadir, has rejected the Pakistan Peoples Party's allegations of election rigging, saying the people of Mirpur Division voted for PML-N on the basis of its performance and development agenda.

Addressing a series of corner meetings in Neelum, Qadir said the PPP should respect the democratic verdict and accept the election results with grace. He main-



tained that voters had endorsed the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and Maryam Nawaz, as well as the party's vision of development, good governance, constitutional stability, public welfare, and a prosperous Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

He congratulated PML-N workers for their dedication and organisational discipline, expressing confidence that the party would maintain its winning momentum in the upcoming elections in Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions.

Qadir also announced that a

large number of political workers and community leaders from Upper Neelum had joined the PML-N from the PPP, PTI, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, Jamaat-e-Islami, and independent groups. He said the new entrants included local office-bearers, activists, tribal representatives, and an independent candidate from several areas of Upper Neelum.

He added that the PPP had failed to present a practical development model for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Selection of Key ring

ISLAMABAD: A girl selecting her named key ring enjoy from a stall outside the Pakistan Monument located on the Western Shkarparian Hills, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Election Commission Declares Winners for Mirpur Division in AJK Vote

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: The Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has issued the notification of the returned candidates from the constituencies of Mirpur Division on the basis of the official election results received in connection with the General Elections to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly held on July 27, 2026.

According to the Spokesperson for the Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the following candidates have been declared returned from the respective constituencies of Mirpur Division:

- LA-1 Mirpur-I: Azhar Sadiq
- LA-2 Mirpur-II: Chaudhry Qasim Majeed
- LA-3 Mirpur-III: Chaudhry Yasir Sultan
- LA-4 Mirpur-IV: Rukhsar Ahmad
- LA-5 Bhimber-I: Waqar Ahmad Noor
- LA-6 Bhimber-II: Muhammad Razaq Chaudhry
- LA-7 Bhimber-III: Tariq Farooq
- LA-8 Kotli-I: Zafar Iqbal Malik
- LA-9 Kotli-II: Umair Naeem
- LA-10 Kotli-III: Muhammad Yaseen Chaudhry
- LA-11 Kotli-IV: Muhammad Asif



- LA-12 Kotli-V: Muhammad Riyasat Khan

- LA-13 Kotli-VI: Ayaz Ahmad.

WWF Secretary Reviews Healthcare, Welfare Facilities for Workers in Multan

Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Secretary Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) Zulfikar Ahmed visited Mukhtar A. Sheikh Hospital in Multan to review healthcare services provided to industrial workers and their families under the Workers Welfare Fund.

During the visit, hospital management briefed the secretary on the institution's performance and informed him that registered workers receive up to

90% subsidised treatment, diagnostic tests, and other medical services through a dedicated Workers' Facilitation Desk. Inspecting various departments, Zulfikar Ahmed expressed satisfaction with the quality of healthcare and stressed the need for industrial establishments to provide accurate worker data so that more beneficiaries can access WWF welfare programmes. He said the vision of Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource

Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain is to ensure workers receive world-class healthcare, education, and welfare services across Pakistan. The secretary also emphasised upgrading WWF schools, medical colleges, and vocational training centres to international standards and announced that a comprehensive reform proposal would be presented to the federal minister. Later, he visited Fatima Fertilizer



Company, where officials highlighted employee welfare initiatives. Reaffirming WWF's commitment, Zulfikar

Ahmed said workers' contributions were being utilised transparently and effectively, adding, "When workers prosper,

the nation prospers." He pledged continued support to expand welfare services for workers nationwide.

Mirpur Administration denies social media rumours, says situation normal

Bureau Report

MIRPUR: The District Administration Mirpur has strongly rejected reports circulating on social media claiming the death of a mosque imam, a woman, and a child during recent unrest, as well as rumours of a curfew, describing them as false, fabricated, and baseless.

In a statement, the district administration's spokesperson clarified that reports alleging the martyrdom of Bilal Mosque Imam Inayat Ullah, a resident of Kharian, inside the mosque are completely untrue. The spokesperson also dismissed claims that a curfew or similar restrictions had been imposed in Mirpur, stating that the city remains open and the law and order situation is fully under control.

According to the administration, no woman or child lost their lives during the clashes between protesters and police at various locations in Mirpur on the previous day. However, it confirmed that three individuals died in the incidents.

The spokesperson said normal life has resumed across the city, with businesses operating and citizens carrying out their daily activities without disruption.

The district administration urged the public to rely only on official sources for information, avoid spreading unverified reports on social media, and play a constructive role in maintaining peace, social harmony, and public order by helping prevent the spread of misinformation.

DPO Toba Tek Singh Chairs Crime Review Meeting, Orders Crackdown on Criminal Gangs

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh Akhlaq Ullah Tarar chaired a comprehensive crime review meeting at the DPO Office to assess the district's law and order situation and issue directives for improving police performance. The meeting was attended by DSP Investigation Asif Ali Shah, DSP Sadar Circle Toba Khalid Mahmood, DSP Gojra Alam Din, DSP Pir Mahal Munir Ahmad, DSP Kamalia Akhtar Ali, DSP Organized Crime Shahid Hussain, branch heads of the DPO Office and Station House Officers (SHOs) from across the district. During the meeting, the DPO reviewed the overall policing performance and directed all SHOs to trace and arrest dacoit gangs operating in the district. He also ordered strict action against land grabbers, illegal arms holders, drug traffickers, proclaimed offenders and particularly those involved in organizing gambling activities.

DPO Akhlaq Ullah Tarar instructed officers to ensure timely submission of challans to courts, expedite the disposal of cases under investigation, trace all untraced cases without delay and maximize the recovery of stolen property for its return to rightful owners.



Hafiz Naeem Criticises Government, Announces Nationwide Protest Against Petroleum Levy



Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Ameer Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman criticised the ruling parties over the political situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, alleging that the PML-N and PPP were engaged in a dispute over what he termed the "leftovers of Form-47" while people were suffering.

Addressing the graduation ceremony of the Alkhidmat Foundation's Bano Qabil Programme in Multan, he announced a nationwide protest on August 7 against the petroleum levy, describing it as a peaceful movement for public rights. He said major roads would witness motorcycle rallies and urged citizens to participate while maintaining a constitutional and democratic approach.

Hafiz Naeem claimed the petroleum levy had placed an unfair burden on the public, arguing that rising fuel prices, electricity bills and indirect taxes had worsened economic hardships. He also criticised the country's interest-based economic system and expressed concern over poverty and rising debt servicing.

Highlighting education, he said the government had failed to provide affordable, quality education, leaving millions of children out of school, while describing the Bano Qabil initiative as a source of hope by equipping young people with modern skills and employment opportunities.

He also criticised the outsourcing of public schools and urged the government to fulfil its constitutional responsibility to provide education, healthcare and other essential public services.

Board of Revenue Punjab: Land Administration, Global Benchmarks, and the Road to Institutional Excellence



Analysis

Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

“In an age when Rwanda registers land in a single day and Georgia does it through blockchain, Punjab’s 110 million land parcels stand at the threshold of a comparable transformation.”

The Board of Revenue (BOR), Punjab, is one of the oldest and most consequential institutions in Pakistan’s system of governance. For more than a century and a half, it has served as the principal authority for land administration, revenue management, disaster relief, settlement operations, and district administration across the province. Governments have changed, administrative structures have evolved, yet the Board has continued to adapt through institutional reform, technological innovation, and citizen-centric

Reliable land administration is not merely an administrative convenience; it is measured internationally and its performance carries economic consequences. According to the World Bank’s Doing Business assessment, registering property in Pakistan requires six procedures and takes approximately fifty days to complete, at a cost of roughly 5.29 percent of the property’s value — placing the country around the 97th position globally on this specific indicator. Each of these numbers represents friction: lost time for citizens, discouraged investment, and space for informal intermediaries to insert themselves into transactions that should be simple and transparent.

The contrast with international good practice is instructive rather than discouraging. Rwanda completed a nationwide land tenure regularization programme and now processes the overwhelming majority of land transactions within a single day through a fully digital registry. Georgia’s National Agency of Public Registry has built one of the world’s most trusted blockchain-backed title systems, consistently placing the country among the global top five for ease of property registration. New Zealand’s Landonline platform, a fully electronic cadastre, is treated by the World Bank itself as a ‘good practice’ reference point for other



This transformation is being carried forward through the Punjab Urban Land System Enhancement (PULSE) programme, supported by the World Bank, which is extending parcel-based mapping, drone-assisted surveying,

ized in phases without disrupting ongoing administration. The lesson for Punjab is one of sequencing: digitize the record, then re-engineer the transaction, then integrate the databases — each phase building legitimacy for the next.

The Institutional Mandate

Beyond digitization, the Board of Revenue carries a wide statutory mandate: land revenue assessment and collection, maintenance of land records, supervision of revenue officers, settlement and consolidation of holdings, mutation and registration, management of state lands, and the implementation of relief and rehabilitation measures during floods, earthquakes, and droughts. The institution’s role in disaster response — coordinating damage assessment, compensation, and rehabilitation through the district administration — makes it one of the most operationally significant pillars of public administration in the province, engaging directly with millions of affected citizens in periods of acute need.

The Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) serves as the administrative head of the institution, working closely with the Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, and revenue officers to translate provincial policy into implementation at the grassroots level. At present, Mr. Nabeel Javed, Senior Member Board of Revenue, is providing dynamic administrative leadership to the institution. His professional competence and commitment to good governance have strengthened the Board’s performance, with a visible emphasis on digital governance, accountability, institutional discipline, and citizen facilitation that reflects the evolving role of land administration in a modern state. His innovative governance style is distinguished by a readiness to embrace data-driven monitoring of revenue offices, encourage e-mutation uptake at the tehsil level, and cultivate a culture of responsiveness in which citizen grievances are tracked to resolution rather than left to languish in file registers.

dition for investment, credit access, and rural prosperity.”

Why Land Governance Drives Economic Outcomes

International development literature consistently identifies secure and transparent land tenure as a precondition for broader economic activity: it underpins access to formal credit, since land serves as the principal collateral for smallholder and small-business lending across South Asia; it reduces

comparative international experience, several priorities stand out as the natural next phase of reform:

1. Complete the digitization of urban land records with the same rigor already applied to rural Jamabandi, closing the gap that has historically left cities without spatial title information.
 2. Integrate GIS, satellite mapping, and Continuously Operating Reference Stations into a single national-standard cadastral layer, following the parcel-based model already piloted under PULSE.
 3. Reduce the fifty-day, six-procedure registration process toward the one-to-two-day standard achieved in Georgia and New Zealand, primarily by eliminating redundant physical verification steps now made unnecessary by digital records.
 4. Extend blockchain or tamper-evident ledger technology to title records, addressing the transparency and dispute-resolution dimensions on which Pakistan scores weakest internationally.
 5. Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and community engagement, building on the Board’s own GRM and social mobilization initiatives now being procured under PULSE.
 6. Invest in continuous professional training for revenue officers and deeper collaboration with universities and research institutions, ensuring that technological change is matched by institutional capacity.
- None of these priorities requires Punjab to import an unfamiliar



service delivery. What distinguishes the present moment, however, is the scale and pace of digital transformation now underway — and the opportunity this creates to measure Punjab’s performance against national data and international benchmarks.

The origins of the Board of Revenue trace back to the British colonial administration of the nineteenth century, when an organized land revenue system became essential to governance. Following independence in 1947, the institution was retained and strengthened to serve the people of Punjab. Today it functions under the Punjab Government’s Rules of Business as the apex organization for land records, revenue administration, relief operations, and coordination with district administrations, overseeing a rural cadastral base of roughly 55,000 mouzas (revenue estates) across the province.

A National Benchmark: Where Pakistan Stands



economies. These are not aspirational abstractions for Punjab — they are functioning systems whose architecture, sequencing, and citizen-facing design can be studied and adapted.

Punjab’s Digital Transformation: The Numbers

Punjab’s own reform trajectory has accelerated meaningfully. By the middle of 2025, digitization of rural property records had crossed the 80 percent mark province-wide, with districts including Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Sargodha, and Multan reporting near-complete coverage. The provincial government has targeted full digitization coverage in the near term, and from July 1, 2026, the Punjab Land Records Authority’s Green Property Certificate and Property Report — issued under the Management of Land Records Regulations 2025 — became the instrument of record for land transactions in most districts, replacing the traditional Fard extract for transactional purposes.

GIS integration, and digitization of urban and katchi abadi (informal settlement) records — areas historically excluded from systematic land administration. In Rawalpindi division alone, well over three-quarters of mouzas had completed digitization under this initiative, with the remainder targeted for closure in the current phase. Complementary investments in Continuously Operating Reference Stations for satellite-based surveying, enterprise cybersecurity certification, and Arazi Record Centre infrastructure signal that this is a systemic modernization rather than a piecemeal digitization drive.

Pakistan’s experience also sits within a wider South Asian pattern. India’s Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme has extended computerized record-keeping across more than two dozen states and union territories, including Indian Punjab, demonstrating that federal or provincial land systems of comparable scale and colonial-era origin can be modern-



The province’s administrative machinery is further anchored by Chief Secretary Punjab Mr. Zahid Akhtar Zaman, whose coordination role across departments ensures that policy directives from the Chief Minister’s office are translated into disciplined execution at the district and tehsil level, reinforcing the accountability architecture on which land-record reform ultimately depends.

The Board is also benefiting from the dedicated services of Mr. Shafqatullah Mushtaq, Secretary, Board of Revenue, whose administrative expertise contributes to institutional coordination, policy implementation, and responsive governance across the organization’s various wings, and whose steady hand on inter-departmental liaison has helped keep reform milestones on schedule.

“Secure land records are not a bureaucratic convenience; internationally, they are treated as a precondition

for doing business, and citizen welfare — aligns closely with this evidence base. Her administration has prioritized land-record modernization as a flagship governance reform, treating the Green Property Certificate regime and the PULSE programme as tangible markers of a wider commitment to paperless, corruption-resistant public service delivery, and directing that citizen facilitation rather than procedural delay define the Board’s public interface. Implementation, however, depends on coordinated execution by the Board of Revenue, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and revenue officers across all forty-one districts of the province, translating policy direction into the measurable outcomes that international indices actually track.

A Roadmap for Strengthening the Board

Drawing on both the trajectory already underway in Punjab and the

model wholesale. Rather, they extend a direction already visible in the PULSE programme, the Green Property Certificate regime, and the Board’s own procurement pipeline for drones, cybersecurity certification, and GIS infrastructure. The task ahead is one of consolidation and acceleration rather than reinvention.

Conclusion

The Board of Revenue Punjab has travelled a remarkable journey from a colonial revenue institution to a modern governance organization serving tens of millions of citizens. Its history reflects resilience; its recent digitization record — more than eighty

percent of rural records computerized, a new Green Property Certificate regime, and an active World Bank-supported modernization programme — demonstrates genuine administrative momentum. Measured against the fifty-day national average for property registration and against international benchmarks set by Rwanda, Georgia, and New Zealand, the distance still to travel is clear, but so is the direction. Under the leadership of Senior Member Board of Revenue Mr. Nabeel Javed, supported by Secretary Board of Revenue Mr. Shafqatullah Mushtaq, and guided by the reform-oriented vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the institution is well positioned to close that distance and to establish itself as a regional model of excellence in land administration and public service.

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Combating Human Trafficking Requires More Than Words on a Commemorative Day

As Pakistan joins the international community in observing World Day against Human Trafficking, the government's renewed pledge to combat this crime is welcome, but the scale of the challenge demands scrutiny beyond ceremonial statements. Human trafficking is rightly described as one of the most serious organized violations of human rights, a crime that thrives precisely because it exploits the vulnerabilities of those with the least power to resist exploitation, migrant laborers, trafficked women and children, and communities pushed by poverty into the hands of those who promise opportunity and deliver bondage instead.

The government's acknowledgment that trafficking is intrinsically linked to irregular migration, forged documents, money laundering and forced labor reflects an accurate understanding of how these criminal networks actually operate. Trafficking rarely exists in isolation; it is woven into broader informal economies and cross-border criminal enterprises. This makes the promised coordination between the FIA, provincial governments, and international partners like INTERPOL and UNODC not just useful but essential, since traffickers routinely exploit precisely the gaps between jurisdictions and agencies.

Equally important is the emphasis on training FIA's Anti-Human Trafficking Units to treat victims with compassion rather than suspicion. Too often, trafficking victims are treated as complicit in their own exploitation, particularly when their situation involves irregular migration or informal labor arrangements. Recognizing victims as victims, deserving of legal protection, psychosocial support and dignified reintegration, rather than criminals to be processed, is a meaningful shift in framing that must be matched by consistent practice on the ground.

Yet commitments and strategies, however well-articulated, are only as strong as their implementation. Pakistan has periodically announced anti-trafficking initiatives in years past, and the persistent scale of the problem, particularly affecting domestic workers, laborers migrating for work abroad, and vulnerable children, suggests that enforcement gaps remain wide. Preventive mechanisms are only effective if adequately resourced and free from the corruption that sometimes allows trafficking networks to operate with impunity.

The appeal to ordinary citizens to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity is a reasonable civic ask, but it cannot substitute for systemic protections. Vulnerable populations need economic alternatives, accessible legal recourse, and functioning rehabilitation services, not merely public awareness campaigns.

As Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to eradicating trafficking and expanding opportunity for its youth, the real measure of progress will not be found in this year's commemorative statements, but in whether next year's trafficking statistics show measurable decline, whether victims report receiving genuine support, and whether perpetrators face consistent, timely justice rather than occasional, high-profile prosecutions.

Kuwait-Pakistan Accord: Multipolar Security in the Gulf

Sultan M Hali

The formalization of a broad defence cooperation agreement between Kuwait and Pakistan marks a subtle but significant recalibration in the Gulf's security architecture. For decades, the Gulf monarchies have leaned heavily on Western defence guarantees, particularly the United States, to deter external threats and stabilize internal vulnerabilities. Yet the Kuwait-Pakistan accord signals a diversification of security partnerships, embedding Islamabad more directly into the Gulf's strategic calculus. This development deserves careful scrutiny, not only for its immediate military implications but also for its broader geopolitical resonance.

Pakistan's Historic Security Role

Pakistan's military footprint in the Gulf is not new. Since the 1970s, Pakistani forces have been deployed in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, providing training, manpower, and operational support. These deployments were not merely transactional; they reflected trust in Pakistan's professionalism, neutrality, and shared cultural-religious affinities. By formalizing ties with Kuwait, Islamabad reasserts itself as a direct stakeholder in Gulf security, bridging the gap between Western guarantees and indigenous Muslim-majority partnerships. This duality adds redundancy to the Gulf's deterrence posture, particularly in the face of Iran's assertiveness and the growing menace of nonstate actors in maritime domains.

Recalibration, Not Abandonment

Does Kuwait's move represent a structural shift away from reliance on Western powers? The answer lies in nuance. Kuwait remains firmly anchored to U.S. and NATO frameworks, but the accord reflects a hedging

strategy. By cultivating ties with Pakistan—a nucleararmed Muslim state with proven expeditionary capabilities—Kuwait reduces overdependence on Western powers. This is consistent with broader Gulf trends: Saudi Arabia and the UAE have diversified partnerships with China, Turkey, and South Asia. In this sense, Kuwait's outreach to Pakistan is less about rupture and more about resilience, acknowledging that multipolarity now defines regional order.

Deployment Dynamics

The agreement provides for cooperation in training, logistics, and intelligence sharing. Yet permanent basing of Pakistani troops or naval assets on Kuwaiti soil remains unlikely in the near term. Kuwait's political culture is cautious about foreign troop presence, shaped by sensitivities from the 1990 Iraqi invasion and subsequent U.S. deployments. Rotational deployments, joint exercises, and maritime patrol detachments are more plausible. These arrangements would allow Pakistan to project presence without triggering domestic anxieties in Kuwait. Importantly, the accord creates the legal scaffolding for such deployments should regional instability escalate.

Pakistan's Logistical Advantages

For Pakistan, the accord offers tangible dividends. It enhances forward presence in the Gulf, enabling closer monitoring of maritime traffic in the northern Gulf, including chokepoints critical for global energy flows. It expands operational reach, providing staging grounds for rapid deployment to protect expatriate communities and commercial interests. It strengthens defence diplomacy, giving Pakistan leverage in Gulf councils and enhancing its bargaining position vis-à-vis India, which has cultivated strong ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Finally, it reinforces economic integration, as military cooperation often dovetails with labour, trade, and energy agreements,

thereby consolidating Pakistan's economic footprint in the Gulf. These advantages underscore how defence diplomacy can serve as a multiplier for Pakistan's broader strategic and economic objectives.

Defence Industrial Cooperation

The accord also lowers institutional barriers for defence industrial collaboration. Kuwait, like other Gulf states, seeks cost-effective platforms to supplement expensive Western acquisitions. The JF17 Thunder fighter jet, jointly developed by Pakistan and China, offers affordability, customization, and political alignment. While Kuwait traditionally procures Western systems, limited purchases or co-funding of Pakistani hardware would symbolize South-South defence collaboration. Such diversification reduces vulnerability to Western export restrictions and signals Kuwait's intent to broaden procurement sources.

Strategic Implications for the Gulf

The Kuwait-Pakistan accord must be situated within the broader Gulf security mosaic. Iran's assertiveness, maritime insecurity in the Strait of Hormuz, and the proliferation of nonstate threats have compelled Gulf states to rethink reliance on singular guarantors. Pakistan's entry as a formal partner adds a layer of strategic redundancy. It also reflects the Gulf's recognition that resilience in a fragmented regional order requires multipolar partnerships. For Pakistan, the accord enhances prestige, operational reach, and bargaining power. For Kuwait, it provides a hedge against overdependence and a symbolic alignment with a Muslim-majority nuclear state.

Academic Resonance

From an academic perspective, the accord illustrates three broader trends. First, multipolarity in regional security, as Gulf states diversify partnerships to reduce vulnerability to external

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Iran War, Pickaxe and the Erosion of American Might

In the arid expanse of Iran's Central Plateau, a mountain known as Kuh-e Kolang Gaz La, or "Pickaxe Mountain," has become the central pivot upon which the fate of the Middle East now turns. More than just a geological formation, it represents a new, terrifying phase in the long-standing conflict between Iran, the United States, and Israel. As President Donald Trump publicly threatens to bomb the site—a facility buried so deep it may be impervious to America's most powerful conventional weapons—the world is witnessing the failure of military hegemony and the birth of a new, multipolar reality.

Pickaxe Mountain is not a new site of uranium enrichment, but a fortress carved out of desperation. Its construction was a direct response to years of sabotage and strikes, including a 2020 attack on the Natanz centrifuge manufacturing plant widely attributed to Israel.

Iranian officials, tired of their above-ground facilities being vulnerable, vowed to move their most sensitive work into the "heart of the mountain". Satellite imagery and expert analysis, including assessments from the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, suggest the facility lies between 80 and 100 meters—or potentially deeper—beneath the summit.

To put this in perspective, the U.S. military's premier bunker-buster, the 30,000-pound GBU-57 Massive

Ordnance Penetrator (MOP), is designed to penetrate up to 60 meters of earth before detonating. The depth of Pickaxe Mountain is deliberately engineered to render this technological marvel obsolete.

Despite the attacks on Iran's main nuclear sites—Fordow, Isfahan, and Natanz—during the 2025 and 2026 conflicts, Pickaxe Mountain has remained untouched. This has led to intense speculation about what lies inside. While Iran insists the facility is merely a centrifuge manufacturing plant to replace the destroyed site at Natanz, experts are skeptical.

The scale of the construction, spanning 2.7 square kilometers and featuring multiple entrances and hardened defenses, suggests it is capable of housing a full-scale uranium enrichment plant. Israeli intelligence now claims that thousands of centrifuges were moved into the mountain's tunnels last fall, representing a "fallback" nuclear capability that could allow Iran to continue its program even under relentless bombardment.

This intelligence has sparked a very public spat between the leaders of the United States and Israel. When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington to present evidence of Iran's activities at Pickaxe

Mountain, he was met not with gratitude, but with a sharp public rebuke.

Trump, appearing on Fox News, dismissed the necessity of Netanyahu's intelligence, stating, "I don't need Bibi to tell me that. Bibi is telling me that because he wants me to stay involved." He added, "I know exactly what's going on at Pickaxe. It's not a big problem".

This public dressing down highlighted a fundamental fracture in the alliance. American officials reportedly view Netanyahu as unreliable, and there is a growing sense in Washington that Israel "sees what it wants to see" in the intelligence, pushing for an escalation that the U.S. may not want. Trump's irritation was palpable; he questioned why Netanyahu had to "announce it to the world" instead of simply telling him privately.

This rupture is significant. It suggests that the U.S. is weary of a war that has failed to deliver decisive results, while Israel, fearing an Iranian bomb, is desperate to see the military campaign through to its conclusion. However, the reality on the ground suggests that brute force—specifically air power—is no longer the decisive factor it once was.

Iran's resilience, demonstrated through its ability to survive decades of sanctions and major military strikes, is a testament to the limitations of Amer-

ican firepower. The Biden administration's stated goal of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran has been thwarted not by a lack of will, but by Iran's strategic patience and its ability to harden its assets.

The conflict has now entered a paradoxical phase: the weapons designed to destroy Iran's program, like the MOP, may be insufficient to penetrate its new defenses, rendering billions of dollars in military hardware ineffective. Iran's message is clear: if it truly wishes to cross the threshold to a nuclear weapon, no conventional force on Earth can stop it.

Simultaneously, Iran has demonstrated its strategic prowess in another theater: the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has been engaging in a high-stakes diplomatic and military confrontation with the U.S. and its allies, fundamentally rewriting the rules of the waterway that carries one-fifth of global oil. Iran has forcefully ejected the United States from any role in managing the strait.

Through negotiations with Oman, Tehran has proposed a new arrangement where the northern shipping lane remains entirely under Iranian control. When Oman suggested a 50-50 joint control formula, Iran rejected it outright. Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi has declared that the strait "will never return to its pre-war arrangements," warning that any European warship attempting to approach would be a "legitimate target".

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Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Reviving Education through Nawaz Sharif Eminence Schools

The economic, social, and political progress of any country depends largely on the quality of its education system. Nations that fail to invest in education—the most fundamental pillar of development—inevitably lag behind in every sphere of life. History has repeatedly proven that education is the cornerstone of national progress and prosperity. Therefore, providing free and quality education is one of the foremost responsibilities of any government.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's education sector continues to face serious challenges. UNESCO's recent report has exposed the weaknesses of our education system and highlighted several alarming issues. According to the report, the literacy rate among people aged ten years and above has increased only marginally, from 61 percent to 63 percent, reflecting an annual growth of merely two percent.

The report further reveals that thousands of public schools across all four provinces, as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, lack basic facilities. Some schools do not have toilets, while others are without furniture. In many institutions, there are no teachers, electricity, boundary walls, or even proper roofs. Several schools lack textbooks, and in many cases, students do not even have adequate seating arrangements.

Keeping these realities in view, the government's declaration of an educational emergency has largely remained a paper exercise. Pakistan's education system has yet to align itself with modern global standards. Developed countries allocate around seven percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education, whereas Pakistan continues to spend only a small portion of its budget on this vital sector. This is one of

the primary reasons why millions of children are still deprived of their fundamental right to education. It is a bitter reality that instead of significantly increasing the education budget, successive governments have often reduced it.

Even after seventy-eight years of independence, Pakistan has failed to establish a clear direction for its education system. At different times, we have attempted to emulate the educational models of various countries without developing a sustainable system tailored to our own national needs. Every new government has sought to reshape the education system according to its own priorities, resulting in a lack of continuity in educational policies. Consequently, educational standards have steadily declined, leaving the country behind in many areas of development.

One of the biggest reasons for the deterioration of education in Pakistan is the absence of a uniform education system. The class divide has caused irreparable damage to our educational structure. Children from affluent families enjoy access to world-class educational opportunities, while those belonging to middle- and lower-income families have limited access to quality education. This disparity has widened social inequalities and deprived countless talented students of opportunities to succeed.

In this context, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has introduced the Nawaz Sharif Eminence Schools under the Punjab Education Foundation. Alongside several other public welfare initiatives, this project aims to modernize the education system in accordance with the demands of the digital age. It can rightly be regarded as a positive step toward improving Pakistan's declining educational standards.

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Japan, IOM Strengthen Pakistan’s Border Management with Equipment Handover to FIA

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Organization for Migration (IOM), with funding from the Government of Japan, has handed over advanced border management equipment and transport vehicles to Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), marking the completion of a four-year project aimed at strengthening migration governance and border security.

The handover ceremony at FIA Headquarters was attended by Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi, IOM Pakistan Chief of Mission Mio

Sato, and FIA Director General Dr Usman Anwar. The equipment includes biometric, IT, surveillance, communication, security and solar systems for 21 FIA operational locations, including the National Command and Control Centre, to enhance intelligence-led efforts against human trafficking, migrant smuggling and cybercrime.

Three transport vans were also provided for Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore international airports to support the safe and dignified handling of returning migrants.

The project further strengthened

institutional capacity by upgrading the FIA Training Academy and training more than 150 FIA officers in rights-based border management, investigation techniques and biometric verification. Over 200 officials and civil society representatives also received training on victim identification and protection.

Officials described the initiative as a significant step towards strengthening Pakistan’s border management while promoting human rights, regional cooperation and effective responses to transnational crime through sustained international partnership.



JCCI Chairman Sarfraz Malik Congratulates Ch. Tabraiz Aurah on Election as President of Pakistan Press Club London

Spokesman Report

JHELUM: Sarfraz Malik, CEO SLS Group and Chairman of Jhelum Chamber of Commerce & Industry, has congratulated Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah on his election as President of Pakistan Press Club London.

Calling it a proud moment for Jhelum and Pakistan, Malik said the appointment reflects growing global recognition of Pakistani talent, leadership and professionalism.

He expressed confidence that under Aurah’s leadership, the Pakistan Press Club London will strengthen professional journalism, promote unity among media professionals, and enhance the positive image of Pakistan and its diaspora in the UK.

Malik wished Aurah continued success and hoped his tenure inspires more Pakistanis to take on global leadership roles while strengthening Pakistan-UK ties.



SECP Imposes Rs4.73 Billion Penalties in Crackdown on Corporate Violations

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has intensified its enforcement drive, imposing more than Rs4.73 billion in penalties through 531 adjudication proceedings conducted between February and June 2026 to strengthen corporate governance and regulatory compliance.

According to the SECP, enforcement actions targeted listed and unlisted companies, financial institutions, non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), and the insurance sector. Among listed companies, 99 proceedings resulted in penalties exceeding Rs9.1 million for violations including failure to hold statu-



tory meetings, inadequate disclosures, breaches of corporate governance, and non-compliance with board composition requirements.

The regulator also concluded 69 capital market proceedings, imposing penalties of over Rs1.61 million for violations of securities and anti-money

laundering laws. In the NBFC sector, 53 cases resulted in penalties exceeding Rs1.47 million, while 25 insurance cases attracted fines of more than Rs2.11 million for breaches involving claims settlement, solvency, reinsurance, and AML compliance.

The largest penalties—Rs4.7 billion—were imposed in 285 cases involving private and unlisted companies, including action against firms engaged in illegal deposit-taking. The SECP also pursued enforcement against state-owned enterprises to improve compliance.

SECP Chairman Dr Kabir Ahmed Sidhu said the regulator would continue enforcing corporate laws, protecting investors, and promoting transparent, fair, and accountable markets.

Interfaith Harmony Event in Washington D. C. Honors Service to Humanity

News Desk

WASHINGTON D. C: An Interfaith Harmony ceremony in Washington D. C. celebrated public service and unity, with leaders from Muslim and Sikh communities honoring those who serve humanity.

Dr. Sajid Tarar, Founder and Chairman of _Muslims of America_, said true leadership is measured not by public office but by positive impact on people’s lives. He noted that public service is most meaningful when rooted in guidance, compassion, humility and commitment to others.

Dr. Jasdeep Singh Jassi, Chairman of _Sikhs of America_, stressed the need to recognize individuals who rise above differences to serve society. He added that communities grow stronger when we appreciate those who dedicate their lives to others.

Ayesha Khan, Member of the State Central Committee Baltimore, also addressed the event.

At the conclusion, a Humanity Award was presented to Khader Fareed, Health Minister of Karnataka, India, on behalf of Muslims and Sikhs of America. Fareed, a Muslim, was elected after defeating BJP five times.

BingX Launches Dedicated Trust Center to Boost Transparency and Security

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: BingX, a leading crypto exchange and Web3-AI company, has launched a dedicated Trust Center showcasing its security framework, asset transparency, and operational milestones. The move aims to strengthen market confidence for its 40+ million global users.

The platform highlights 100% Proof of Reserves with monthly Merkle Tree snapshots. As of July 15, 2026, reserve ratios include BTC 142.82%, ETH 126.48%, USDT 131.83%, and USDC 124.41%. User protection is further backed by a \$150 million Shield Fund, multi-signature authorization, tiered cold/warm/hot wallets, and 24/7 support. BingX also holds PCI DSS 4.0.1 and ISO/IEC 27001 certifications.

On the compliance front, BingX EU has applied for MiCAR authorization. The exchange is expanding into BingX TradFi, offering stocks, forex, commodities and indices alongside crypto.

“Mera Pyara” Team Reunites 3-Month Missing Child Ghulam Rasool with Parents

City Desk

LAHORE: The “Mera Pyara” Virtual Centre for Child Safety of Punjab Safe Cities Authority has successfully reunited 3-month-old Ghulam Rasool with his parents after three months.

According to the PSCA spokesperson, the child was found in the jurisdiction of Police Station Sadar Muridke and shifted to Child Protection Bureau Lahore. The “Mera Pyara” team then began tracing his family.

Though the child only remembered “32 Chak” as his address, the team used modern technology and data sources to identify 32 Chak, District Pakpattan. Further investigation revealed his parents had relocated to Arifwala. With help from local sources, the team contacted the family and reunited them with Ghulam Rasool.

PIPEX Expo in Riyadh Showcases Pakistan’s Real Estate Investment Potential

Spokesman Report

RIYADH: The PIPEX Pakistan International Property Expo, the largest Pakistani real estate exhibition in Saudi Arabia, concluded successfully in Riyadh after attracting a strong turnout of Saudi investors, overseas Pakistanis, business leaders, and property developers.

The two-day exhibition featured 17 leading Pakistani real estate companies showcasing residential, commercial, and housing projects. Visitors explored investment opportunities, met developers, and

received detailed information on projects aimed at attracting foreign investment.

The expo was inaugurated by prominent Saudi investor Dr. Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, who described Pakistan’s real estate sector as an emerging and attractive investment destination. He said Pakistan’s modern property developments offer promising opportunities for Saudi investors and highlighted the growing economic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Imran Khattak, President

of PIPEX International Expo, said the event exceeded expectations, with strong participation reflecting increasing confidence in Pakistan’s real estate market.

Distinguished guests, including Raja Tufail Ahmed and Sheikh Zaid Al-Tamimi, said the exhibition had opened new avenues for bilateral investment and trade cooperation. Community leaders praised the organisers for strengthening business links between the two countries.

Several overseas Pakistani investors also expressed strong interest in property projects, describing the expo as an



important platform for encouraging foreign investment and enhancing the economic engagement of the Pakistani diaspora.

 Ambassador of Achievement

Yerzhan Kistafin's Five-Year Legacy in Elevating Pakistan-Kazakhstan Relations

 Naveed Ahmad Khan

As Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin prepares to conclude his diplomatic tenure in Pakistan, he leaves behind a relationship transformed. What began in June 2021 as a modest bilateral partnership has, over his five years in Islamabad, evolved into a strategic alliance marked by high-level state visits, expanded trade ambitions, deepened institutional cooperation, and a genuinely warmer relationship between two nations that share history, faith and geography but had, for decades, underutilized their potential for closer engagement.

A Diplomat's Journey to Islamabad

Born on October 8, 1978, in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin brought to his Pakistan posting a career built on legal and diplomatic expertise. A graduate in international law from Karaganda State University, he later earned a master's degree in international relations from the European Institute for International Strategic Studies in Brussels. His professional journey began in 1999 within Kazakhstan's Department of Justice, before he moved into the Ministry of Finance's legal service. He entered the diplomatic corps in 2001 as an attaché in the International Legal Department of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, steadily building the institutional knowledge that would later serve him well in navigating the complexities of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations.

When Kistafin arrived in Islamabad as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador in June 2021, he inherited a relationship long on goodwill but comparatively modest in substantive economic engagement. Over the following years, he set about changing that.

Trade: From Modest Beginnings to Ambitious Targets

Perhaps the most tangible measure of Kistafin's tenure lies in bilateral trade figures, which tell a story of steady, and at times dramatic, growth. When Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hosted Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Islamabad in February 2026, he candidly acknowledged that bilateral trade stood at just \$250 million, a figure he described as failing to reflect the true strength of the friendship between the two nations. That visit produced a striking response: both leaders committed to raising trade volume to \$1 billion within a year.

This ambition was not built on rhetoric alone. Trade data from Kazakhstan's own Ministry showed that between January and November 2025, bilateral trade reached \$105.6 million, more than double the \$48.7 million recorded during the same period in 2024. Imports from Pakistan into Kazakhstan rose nearly 20 percent, driven by food products and light industry goods. Potato imports from Pakistan surged almost 94-fold to \$9.28 million, while certain knitted textile products grew 125-fold. These figures, though still modest in absolute terms, represented a meaningful structural shift in the trade relationship, one that industry observers described as creating a strong foundation for further expansion.

Kistafin himself has been a visible advocate for this trade agenda well beyond diplomatic receptions. During a visit to the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in April 2026, he told the city's business community that Kazakhstan and Pakistan had formally elevated their ties to a strategic partnership, with the \$1 billion trade target now a shared national commitment. He noted that President Tokayev's visit, the first by a Kazakh head of state to Pakistan in more than two decades, had resulted in the signing of over 70 agreements and memoranda of understanding spanning trade, education, sports and culture, a scale of agreement-signing rarely seen in Pakistan's bilateral diplomacy with any single country.

Building Institutional Foundations

Beyond headline trade figures.



Kistafin's tenure has been characterized by a methodical rebuilding of the institutional architecture needed to sustain economic cooperation. He played a central role in reactivating the Pakistan-Kazakhstan Business Council, which he noted was now functioning effectively and creating genuine new opportunities for trade and investment between the private sectors of both countries.

His diplomatic engagements also extended into ambitious infrastructure and connectivity discussions. Notably, agreements were finalized during his tenure covering a Transit Trade Agreement that would allow landlocked Kazakhstan to access Pakistani ports, including Karachi, Bin Qasim and Gwadar, for regional trade. For a country with no direct maritime access, such arrangements carry significant strategic value, offering Kazakhstan an alternative route to global markets through Pakistan's Arabian Sea ports, while positioning Pakistan more firmly as a transit hub linking Central Asia with South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

The February 2026 presidential visit itself produced seven vital memoranda of understanding covering transport, education, trade and culture, alongside the broader package of over 30 agreements signed in sectors including petroleum, mining and maritime affairs, reflecting the breadth of cooperation Kistafin helped cultivate during his posting.

Connectivity and People-to-People Ties

Recognizing that economic cooperation depends on physical connectivity, Kistafin consistently emphasized security, connectivity and stability as essential pillars for strengthening relations between the two countries. In one of his final press engagements

before concluding his tenure, he announced that a direct flight between Pakistan and Kazakhstan would commence later in 2026 or in 2027, a development expected to meaningfully boost business ties, tourism and people-to-people exchanges that had long been constrained by the absence of direct air links.

Reflecting on his five years in Pakistan, Kistafin frequently cited the numerous high-level visits that punctuated his tenure, chief among them President Tokayev's historic February 2026 visit, as moments that would remain among his most cherished memories of his posting.

Beyond Trade: Education, Culture and Regional Diplomacy

Kistafin's approach to diplomacy extended well beyond economic statistics. He placed considerable emphasis on educational cooperation, promoting student exchanges, joint research programs, and collaboration between universities in the two countries. He engaged actively with Pakistan's intellectual and policymaking community, participating in numerous seminars, public policy dialogues and roundtables organized by think tanks and academic institutions across the country.

His outreach extended to federal and provincial governments, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and Islamabad's diplomatic corps, reflecting an approach to diplomacy that sought to engage Pakistani society broadly rather than confining his efforts to official government channels alone. He also visited institutions such as the International Parliamentarians' Congress Secretariat in Islamabad, where he expressed appreciation for cooperation on shared concerns including climate change, human



rights, food and health security,
and interfaith harmony.

Kistafin also worked to advance cooperation between Pakistan's Ministry of Information Technology and Kazakhstan's payment infrastructure, including engagement with the State Bank of Pakistan's RAAST digital payment system, signaling his interest in extending bilateral cooperation into the digital economy alongside more traditional areas of trade and connectivity.

Recognition and Legacy

Kistafin's contributions did not go unnoticed by his peers in Islamabad's diplomatic community. In 2025, from among more than 120 diplomatic missions and international organizations represented in Islamabad, he was the sole recipient of the "Ambassador of the Year" title, a recognition of his substantial contribution to strengthening Kazakhstan-Pakistan cooperation. This followed earlier recognition in 2022, when he received the Global Ambassador Award, underscoring the consistency of his diplomatic performance throughout his posting.

As he prepared to conclude his tenure, Kistafin called on institutions including the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECHE), where he was honored alongside Azerbaijan's outgoing ambassador for contributions to advancing scientific and educational partnerships. He also paid farewell visits to Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who commended his services in deepening bilateral relations, and to other key government and institutional figures across Islamabad.



A Foundation for the Future

As Ambassador Kistafin departs Islamabad, he leaves behind more than diplomatic goodwill. He leaves an institutional and economic foundation, reactivated business councils, transit trade frameworks, a growing trade relationship, and imminent direct flight connectivity upon which his

successor and both governments can build. Whether the ambitious \$1 billion trade target is achieved within the stated timeline remains to be seen, but the trajectory established during his tenure suggests that Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations have moved decisively beyond symbolic friendship toward substantive, institutional-

ized partnership.

For a relationship that Prime Minister Sharif himself acknowledged had long underperformed its potential, Kistafin's five years in Islamabad represent a meaningful down payment on what both nations now describe as a strategic partnership built for the decades ahead.

Senate Chairman Reaffirms Pakistan-China Strategic Partnership, Invites More Chinese Investment

 **Kiran Asim**

ISLAMABAD, JULY 29: Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its strategic partnership with China during a meeting with a high-level delegation of Shandong High Speed Group

(SDHS), led by Chairman Shu Xiang. The meeting focused on expanding cooperation and investment in infrastructure, transport, energy, logistics, industrial development, and other strategic sectors to deepen economic ties between the two countries. Welcoming the delegation, Gilani

described Pakistan-China relations as an enduring and trusted friendship based on mutual respect and unwavering cooperation. He appreciated China's continued support for Pakistan and acknowledged the significant contribution of Chinese companies to economic development, employment



generation, and sustainable growth. The Senate chairman termed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a landmark initiative that has strengthened regional connectivity, economic integration, and long-term development. He expressed confidence that bilateral trade and investment

would continue to expand, promoting shared prosperity. Gilani reiterated Pakistan's commitment to providing an investor-friendly environment and highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in attracting foreign investment and ensuring economic

stability. He assured continued legislative support for transparent investment policies. The SDHS delegation outlined the company's global expertise and reaffirmed its commitment to expanding long-term investment and participation in Pakistan's development projects.

Sindh Action Committee, Karachi Bar Set Aug 2 Deadline for SPSC Reforms

 **Qayoom Sarohi**

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Action Committee and the Karachi Bar Association have given the Sindh government until August 2 to replace the chairman and members of the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC), warning that a sit-in and blockade of the Hyderabad-Wadhu Wah Bypass will begin on August 3 if their demands are not met.

The announcement came during a visit by Sindh Action Committee Convener Syed Zain Shah and Karachi Bar Association President Advocate Amir Nawaz Waraich to a protest camp established by candidates affected by the SPSC CCE-2024 examinations. Addressing protesters, Syed Zain Shah said students were demanding merit and transparency, pledging the committee's



full support for their movement. Advocate Waraich said the government must restore confidence in the commission by replacing its leadership and suspending the CCE-2024 results until the matter is resolved. He argued that repeated

violations of merit had discouraged educated youth and urged the authorities to address their concerns through credible reforms. Student leaders said a final decision on the proposed sit-in would be taken after consultations within the

Students Action Committee. The protest was attended by leaders of several political and civil society organisations, who expressed solidarity with the students and backed their demand for a transparent and merit-based recruitment process.

Commissioner Multan Expresses Anger Over Slow Progress on Multan Avenue, Brand Road Projects

 **Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Karim Khan visited the ongoing development projects of Multan Avenue and Brand Road Gulgasht and reviewed construction progress in detail. DG MDA Rashid Irshad, Director Development Mubashir Rehman and other officials accompanied him.

Expressing displeasure over delays, the Commissioner said unnecessary delays in development



projects will not be tolerated. He directed relevant institutions to utilize all available resources and immediately accelerate construction work.

He stressed maintaining a balance between speed and quality, stating that no compromise on construction standards will be acceptable.

Officers were instructed to ensure quality at every stage to deliver sustainable infrastructure. Aamir Karim Khan noted that delays waste government resources and erode public trust. He ordered strict adherence to agreed timelines, removal of all project obstacles, and continuous monitoring. He warned that any negligence or further delay will not be accepted, and the public should get the benefits of these projects as soon as possible.

PPP Founding Leader, Former Federal Minister Malik Mukhtar Awan Passes Away in Multan

 **Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Malik Mukhtiar Ahmed Awan, a founding leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party and former federal minister, passed away in Multan. His funeral prayers were offered at Abdali Mosque with attendance from a large number of political and social leaders. Former MPA Syed Ahmed Mujtaba Gilani led a collective prayer.

Prominent participants included MNA Syed Ali Qasim Gilani, former Governor Punjab Malik Rafiq Rajwana, former federal minister Mehr Irshad Sial, PPP Divisional President Khalid Hanif Lodhi, City President Malik Naseem Labar Advocate, and journalists Jabbar Mufti, Shaukat Ashfaq, Mazhar-e-Javed Sial, among many others. Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza



Gilani, Naheed Khan, Senator Dr. Safdar Abbasi, Senator Rubina Qaimkhani, PPP South Punjab President Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood and Senior Vice President Khawaja Rizwan Alam expressed condolences. The deceased was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard. A Qul Khawani will be held Friday at 4 pm at BJ Lawn, Syedan Wala Bypass, before Asr prayers.

PAAPAM Warns Delay in New Auto Policy Is Hurting Pakistan's Auto Industry

 **Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: The Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) has expressed concern over the prolonged delay in finalizing Pakistan's new Auto Industry Development Policy, saying the uncertainty is damaging the country's automotive manufacturing ecosystem. PAAPAM Chairman Usman Aslam Malik said member industries are already facing financial and operational challenges due to the delay. He urged the government to make localization, technology upgradation, and engineering capability the core of the new policy. According to Malik, the last two policies focused mainly on attracting new vehicle assemblers, which increased brands but failed to strengthen local parts manufacturing, indigenous engineering, or domestic technology. Malik warned that without a strategic shift, Pakistan risks losing its industrial base and becoming more dependent on imported vehicles and parts.

Kuwait-Pakistan Accord: Multipolar Security in the Gulf

 **Continued from Page 4**

shocks. Second, defence diplomacy as economic leverage, since military cooperation often catalyses broader economic integration. Third, the symbolism of Muslim-majority partnerships, as alignments with Pakistan carry cultural and political resonance, reinforcing legitimacy in domestic and regional narratives. These trends highlight the interplay between military pragmatism and geopolitical symbolism in shaping Gulf security. **Conclusion** The Kuwait-Pakistan defence accord is not a rupture but a recalibration. It reflects Kuwait's recognition that resilience in an increasingly fragmented order requires multipolar partnerships. For Pakistan, it is an opportunity to reassert itself as a balancing actor in Gulf security, leveraging

military professionalism, cultural affinity, and defence industrial capacity. For the Gulf, it is a step toward diversifying deterrence and embedding redundancy in security architecture. In an era of volatility, such accords are less about replacing old guarantees and more about weaving new layers of resilience. As Faiz Ahmed Faiz once wrote, "Nisar main teri galiyon pe, ai watan, ke jahan chali hai rasm ke koi na sar utha ke chale"—a reminder that dignity and resilience in turbulent times demand collective strength and shared responsibility. The Kuwait-Pakistan accord, in its modest yet meaningful way, embodies that spirit of shared resilience. *Writer is Senior Analyst, TV anchor and Columnist. He is also author of many books. He can be reached at sultanm.hali@gmail.com*

Reviving Education through Nawaz Sharif Eminence Schools

 **Continued from Page 4**

The project represents a significant milestone, particularly for districts, tehsils, and underdeveloped regions of Punjab. These schools feature spacious campuses, state-of-the-art computer laboratories, well-designed classrooms, smart classrooms, STEM laboratories, digital learning systems, and a modern governance framework. Such facilities have the potential to transform Pakistan's education system and bring it closer to international standards. One of the most remarkable features of the Nawaz Sharif Eminence Schools is that children from both affluent and underprivileged backgrounds can study together without discrimination. In terms of infrastructure and educational facilities, these schools rival many leading private institutions. Their modern design and technological resources give the impression of schools found in developed Euro-

pean countries. The successful implementation of this ambitious initiative has also been supported by Shoaib Awan, Chairman of the Punjab Education Foundation. His dedicated efforts have played a vital role in making the project a success. Under his leadership, hundreds of underperforming schools have been brought under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements. Today, more than four million students are receiving education in these institutions, which have been upgraded to meet modern educational standards. Other provinces should also take inspiration from the Punjab Education Foundation's model and implement comprehensive educational reforms on an urgent basis. Every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, deserves access to quality education. One of Pakistan's longstanding chal-

lenges has been the discontinuation of educational initiatives whenever governments change. Instead of building upon successful policies introduced by previous administrations, successive governments often abandon them for political reasons. This lack of continuity has prevented the country from establishing a unified and effective education system, the consequences of which are being borne by the entire nation today. The shortcomings of Pakistan's education system must now be addressed as a matter of national priority. Policy continuity, improved teacher training, and the implementation of a uniform, modern education system are essential if Pakistan is to achieve sustainable development. The country cannot move confidently toward progress and prosperity until every child has equal access to quality education.

Iran War, Pickaxe and the Erosion of American Might

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This is not merely a military blockade; it is a geopolitical revolution. By seizing control of the Hormuz waterway, Iran is undermining the hegemonic design of the United States, which has long controlled the flow of oil and gas to the world. The U. S. naval dominance in the region, once unquestioned, is being challenged by a nation that has demonstrated it is willing to close the strait to force a new status quo. The economic hardship inflicted by the war and the soaring energy prices have put immense pressure on the Trump administration, forcing it to pause attacks and engage in "good talks" with a regime it has spent years trying to cripple. The "pause" in the war, rather

than being a genuine diplomatic breakthrough, has been cynically perceived as a way to restock depleted American weapons stores—a cycle of attrition that has already proven costly. Ultimately, the saga of Pickaxe Mountain and the seizure of the Strait of Hormuz reveals a profound truth: the era of unipolar military dominance is over. Iran, a nation subjected to severe economic hardship for over 30 years, has built a resilient economy, a formidable defensive system, and an effective offensive strategy that has blunted the full might of the U. S. military. The failure of the U. S. and Israel to break the will of the Iranian people or secure their strategic objectives is a landmark event. It signals that military force alone

cannot dictate the outcome of modern conflicts, a lesson already evident in the standoffs between Russia and Ukraine. The world is witnessing the decline of brute force as the ultimate arbiter of international disputes. As Iran prepares to continue its nuclear program, shielded by mountains and defended by a nation that has proven its mettle against a superpower, it stands as a potent symbol that the future of global conflict will be decided not just by bombs, but by endurance, strategy, and an unyielding defense of sovereignty. *The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Michigan, USA.*

ECC meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) at the Finance Division on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Finance Minister virtually chairs ECC, approves steering committee for wheat import mechanism

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today virtually chaired the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, held at the Finance Division.

The ECC considered a summary submitted by the National Food Security & Research Division

and approved the proposal to constitute a Steering committee comprising of Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research; Federal Minister for Commerce; Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Division; Minister for Law Division; SAPM for Coordination of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister of Foreign Affairs; Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Agriculture

and Food Security; Secretary for Finance Division; Secretary for Ministry of Commerce; Secretary for Ministry of National Food Security & Research; Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR); Chief Secretaries of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan; Chairman Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) under the Chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister. The Steering

Committee will, inter alia, do the need assessment and devise operational mechanism with reference to proposal of Wheat import and demand of provinces.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Commerce Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Investment Mr. Qaiser

Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Mr. Haroon Akhtar Khan. Coordinator to Prime Minister on Agriculture and Food Security, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the relevant ministries, divisions, and regulatory authorities also attended the meeting.

Pakistan, Kuwait agree to expand strategic cooperation as defence pact ratified

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kuwait have agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, energy, defence and other key sectors, while reaffirming their commitment to strengthening their long-standing strategic partnership.

According to the Foreign Office, the understanding was reached during a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Kuwaiti counterpart. Both sides agreed to establish joint working groups on trade, investment and energy, alongside separate groups for information technology, agriculture, education and health.

A major outcome of the



meeting was Kuwait's ratification of the Pakistan-Kuwait Defence Cooperation Agree-

ment 2023, signed in June 2023. The Foreign Office described the move as a signif-

icant milestone that provides a comprehensive framework for defence collaboration,

including military training, education, joint exercises, and the exchange of expertise.

Welcoming the development, Ishaq Dar said the agreement would further strengthen institutional ties between the armed forces of both countries. The Foreign Office noted that defence relations between Pakistan and Kuwait date back to the early 1980s and that both countries would work closely to ensure effective implementation of the agreement.

The two sides also pledged to maintain close coordination at international forums, including the United Nations, while Kuwait appreciated the valuable contributions of the Pakistani community living in the Gulf state.

AJK Legislative Assembly Passes Resolution Condemning Revocation of Article 370, 35A

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, chaired by Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, held a session attended by Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and ministers including Mian Abdul Waheed, Sardar Javed Ayub, Ch Qasim Majeed, Nabec-la Ayub, Bazil Ali Naqvi and Malik Zafar.

A resolution moved by Bazal Ali Naqvi, Sardar Zia al-Qamar and Nabila Ayub strongly condemned India's revocation of Article 370 and Article 35A, which abolished Jammu and Kashmir's special status. It urged the international community to play a decisive role in securing the right to self-determination for Kashmiris, in line with UN



Security Council resolutions, and condemned alleged human rights violations, killings and crackdowns by Indian forces in occupied Kashmir. The House also paid tribute to Pakistan's Armed Forces, including Chief of Defence Forces Asim Munir, for highlighting the Kashmir issue internationally.

A separate resolution moved by former Prime Minister Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan criticized Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif over remarks concerning Rawalakot, calling for the Assembly session to be held there and referencing the region's historical role in Kashmir's access-

sion to Pakistan.

The House also referenced PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposal, urging its implementation, and called on the Election Commission to ensure transparent elections, citing alleged irregularities in Mirpur division.

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Air Chief welcome First Commander of National Strategic Command



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Commander National Strategic Command (CNSC) General Syed Aamer Raza held separate meeting with Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber at Air Headquarters in Islamabad after assuming responsibilities as the first commander of the National Strategic Command.

According to the Inter-Services

Public Relations (ISPR), General Aamer Raza called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Baber at Air Headquarters.

During the meeting, the air chiefs congratulated General Aamer Raza on assuming the charge as the first Commander of the National Strategic Command.

The meeting featured discussions on various matters of professional and mutual interest, the ISPR said.

Ahmad Raza appointed as Secretary Interior, Khurram Agha transferred



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Major administrative change in the Federal Ministry of Interior as Secretary Ministry of Interior Captain (R) Muhammad Khurram Agha has been transferred, reported 24NewsHD TV channel on Wednesday.

According to notification, Captain (R) Muhammad Khurram Agha has

been directed to report to the Establishment Division.

Ahmed Raza Sarwar has been appointed new Secretary Ministry of Interior.

Ahmed Raza Sarwar was posted as Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Government.

Establishment Division has issued separate notifications for appointments and transfers.

DSP martyred, six militants killed in Hangu checkpoint attack

News Desk

HANGU: A police officer was martyred and six militants were killed after terrorists attacked the Khazina Banda checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hangu district, officials said.

According to police, officers responded to the assault with heavy resistance during an operation against the militants.

A police spokesperson said DSP Diyar Khan embraced martyrdom during the exchange of fire, while several police personnel accompanying him sustained injuries.

The District Police Officer (DPO) said a total of 18 police personnel, including DSP Mujahid Hussain, were injured during the operation. The wounded were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.

Police said the operation against the militants was continuing, while security forces had cordoned off the area and intensified the search operation.

Senior police officials said the injured personnel were receiving the best possible medical care and vowed that the sacrifice of the martyrs would not go in vain.

MQM-P assures support for PML-N in AJK elections

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Senior leaders of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawab met at MQM-P's Bahadurabad headquarters in Karachi to discuss the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly election scheduled for August 2.

The PML-N delegation, led by Sindh Senior Vice President Ali Akbar Gujjar Advocate, included LA-40 Valley candidate Naeem Khan Advocate and Karachi Division President Salman Khan. The delegation requested MQM-P's support for the party's candidate in the upcoming AJK

election.

During the meeting, both sides discussed matters related to the AJK Assembly election. MQM-P Senior Deputy Convener Anees Qaimkhani assured the PML-N delegation of the party's full support and cooperation.

Several MQM-P leaders, including COC In-charge Furqan Atif, Joint In-charge Abu Al Azhar Chand, MOC In-charge Shakeel Abbasi Advocate and Kashmir Organizing Committee In-charge Maroof Hussain, were also present. PML-N Karachi Division office-bearers, including district presidents, general secretaries and other party officials, also attended the meeting.